

# Revelation: Church of Smyrna

## 1. Salutation

“To the angel of the church in Smyrna write”

*Smyrna* = Hebrew word “myrrh” - a highly valued spice.

Myrrh: holy anointing oil (Ex 30:22-33); Book of Esther -, maidens prepared to meet the king (Esther 2:12-13); also refers to death, spice used for embalming bodies. (Jn 19:39).

## History

- 60km north of Ephesus - double harbour - silted up - is Izmir in Turkey today
- Export of tobacco, grapes, figs, cotton, olives and olive oil
- Very prosperous, like Ephesus
- Known as a beautiful city- “the flower of Iona”
- 27 BC - control of Romans - enjoyed great material prosperity
- Destructive earthquake in 178 AD, rebuilt under Marcus Aurelius
- 370 AD - another earthquake demolished the city - rebuilt
- Foot of mountain - Temple for Zeus - the father of the gods
- Numerous shrines to Apollo, Aphrodite, Asclepius Poseidon
- Embraced compulsory worship of Caesar
- Burn pinch of incense on altar to acknowledge Caesar as Lord
- Paul founded the church on 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey - 53-56 AD
- Polycarp martyred in AD 153

## 2. Title

“These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again” – recurring theme of death in this letter, mentioned three times.

## 3. Commendation

Do you love Jesus because He seems useful to you, or is it because He is beautiful to you? Will you remain true to Jesus even if it becomes costly to you to stay true to him?

Tribulation - *ellipsis* - oppressing, crushing under pressure, oppression

John 16.33; 2 Tim 3.12 – “Are you being persecuted for your faith?”

“I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Replacement theology – FALSE! Somehow, because Israel rejected her Messiah, that all the promises that God gave Israel now fall upon the church – the church has replaced Israel.

The origin of Israel and the church are different, and their destinies are different - root cause of all antisemitism and Holocaust.

So, what did Jesus mean when He said, “those who say they are Jews and are not”.

See website: “First Fruits of Zion”

Vs.9: Describes accusation Jews of Smyrna had against believers so they claimed, “These people are not Jews,” but they themselves were not acting like authentic Jews when they denounced the believers, because informing on a fellow Jew and putting a brother’s life in danger was tantamount to sin according to Jewish law.

This is why Jesus used the phrase they belong to the “synagogue of Satan”. Hebrew word *satan* means “accuser.” If these Jewish leaders denounced the believers as “Christians” to the Roman authorities, they became agents of “the accuser of our brothers” (Revelation 12:10) - they became accusers themselves.

#### **4. Condemnation**

No condemnation or complaint for this church.

#### **5. Counsel**

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.

Jesus says they are not to fear what they are about to suffer. They’re fearful of death, but Jesus promises to give them the crown of life.

#### **6. Exhortation**

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

#### **7. Promise**

The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

“If you’re born once, you die twice. If you’re born twice, you die once.”

Smyrna = the persecuted church – under the rule of these ten emperors of Rome up to 4<sup>th</sup> century

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